

Speed announced at the July 11 meeting that the death toll is now as high as 20—people whose deaths may be attributable to the closing of D.C. General. Speed stressed that the actual death toll is probably much higher, because the ones which are known are mostly cases of homicides or other incidents for which police records are maintained. But in other cases, involving sudden illness or serious disease, it is much more difficult to obtain information about unnecessary deaths that may have occurred because of lengthy ambulance runs, and overcrowded emergency rooms with overworked staffs.

The highlight of the July 11 meeting was the honoring of D.C. General employees. About 30 hospital employees, ranging from laundry workers to administrators, stood up to

identify themselves and be recognized; most had worked at the hospital for at least one or two decades, and some for 30 to 35 years. All expressed their love for their work, and their dedication to serving all who came through the doors, with the highest quality of medical services.

Dr. Muhammad and others made the point that D.C. General is not bricks-and-mortar; that “what makes it a living, breathing, compassionate institution are the men and women who have dedicated their lives to this institution.”

“We’re here to save that spirit, the spirit of D.C. General,” Dr. Mohammed proclaimed.

In their remarks to the meeting, both LaRouche movement leader Dennis Speed, and civil rights movement veteran

LaRouche: The Issue Is The General Welfare

On July 11, Democratic Presidential pre-candidate Lyndon LaRouche spoke via audiotape to a meeting in Washington, D.C. sponsored by the Coalition to Save D.C. General Hospital. The meeting was designed as a tribute by the Coalition to the employees of D.C. General, who were all being laid off on Friday, July 13.

This is Lyndon LaRouche speaking to you. I understand this is the penultimate meeting before the official closing of the hospital. I want to say several things which I think may be of relevance to all of you.

First of all, this fight has not ended, not merely because we are going to continue the fight to restore a full-service general public hospital in Washington, D.C., but because the political situation in the world, in the world economy, and in the politics of the United States is such, that nothing is a “done deal.” We’ve already seen the control of the Senate pass to the Democrats from the Republicans. We have seen other developments which show that the present Bush Administration, who are the fanatics for this kind of thing, are being weakened by themselves, by their own actions. They can’t seem to do anything right. This past week, we have seen the stumbling of the world economy into a new phase of downslide. This is not going to get better. It’s going to become worse. Politics in the world, and in the United States, are going to be shaken up.

Health Care Is Emblematic

Now, the issue, is the issue, as I’ve said earlier, of the general welfare. And health care, of course, is emblematic of the general welfare. In the postwar period, with the experience of the 1930s, the experience of wartime medicine, we, in this country, enacted the Hill-Burton Act.

While the progress under that act was not always what we would have wished, nonetheless, we made progress. We had a good national health-care policy under Hill-Burton. Sometimes we didn’t live up to it, but the policy was good. Then, under Nixon, we had a change. The HMO [health maintenance organization] act was brought in to repeal Hill-Burton. And since then, especially since the collapse of New York City, and Big MAC in 1975, what had once been the fine medical system, the medical-care system of cooperation among public and private institutions and physicians, began to be destroyed. And over recent years, it’s been destroyed at an increasing rate.

This has been accompanied by a philosophy which says we don’t care about people, we care about shareholders. We no longer care about public responsibility for the general welfare. And people who are considered not so desirable, will get less care, and will probably depart our company a bit earlier.

We’ve now come to the point that none of us is going to survive, unless we restore the general welfare principle. That is, that government has no moral authority to govern unless it is efficiently committed to defend the general welfare of not only all the population, but also the posterity. This means health care, it means education, it means basic economic infrastructure, as well as the conditions of life under which private enterprise can make its contribution to improvement of the general welfare and general progress.

The fight is going on. The fight is going to get tougher. People in the Congress have let us down. But they’re going to be hit again by the issue. The issue is going to come back. It’s not a done deal; it’s not going to go away. And those of us who stay with the fight have a chance at least of victory in a struggle that is more than justified, and if we can do well enough, we’ll win. This is the beginning, not the end. This time, when we come back, we’re going to have to come back for a general welfare policy, and to restore to this nation a general health-care policy consistent with the intention of Hill-Burton.